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DE CHECKERS DELIVER. EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES BREAK FOR DE-TRAINED CHECKERS AND SALES PERSONNEL IN SPOKANE AREA.

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THE SPOKANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PROVIDES TRAINING IN ITS DISTRIBUTIVE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT FOR RETAIL CHECKERS AND SALES PERSONNEL. THE GROCERY TRAINING IS AS LIFELIKE AS POSSIBLE IN BOTH PHYSICAL LAYOUT AND RANGE OF OPERATIONS. THE COURSE WAS DEVELOPED WITH THE HELP OF AN ADVISORY COMMITTEE INCLUDING MANAGEMENT, LABOR, AND LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS. IT WAS FOUND THAT THE COURSE AT FIRST CONCENTRATED TOO HEAVILY ON GROCERY WORK, LIMITING THE EXPECTATIONS OF BOTH THE STUDENTS AND THE PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYERS. MORE TIME WAS THEN GIVEN TO BASIC MATHEMATICS, COMMUNICATIONS, SELF-ANALYSIS, AND JOB PROCUREMENT, AND CLASSES GREW TO INCLUDE SPEAKERS, TOURS, AND FILMS. UPON GRADUATION, CERTIFICATES OF COMPLETION AND WALLET-SIZE IDENTITY CARDS ARE NOW GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS AND HAVE BEEN FOUND TO PROVIDE QUICK ACCESS TO PERSONNEL MANAGERS. ALTHOUGH THE REGISTRANTS ARE NOT SCREENED, THEY MUST BE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES OR AT LEAST 18 YEARS OF AGE AND ARE EXPECTED TO CONFORM TO NORMAL BUSINESS STANDARDS IN DRESS AND ATTITUDE. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "AMERICAN VOCATIONAL JOURNAL," VOLUME 41, NUMBER 6, SEPTEMBER 1966. (HH)

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DE CHECKERS DELIVER

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LOS ANGELES

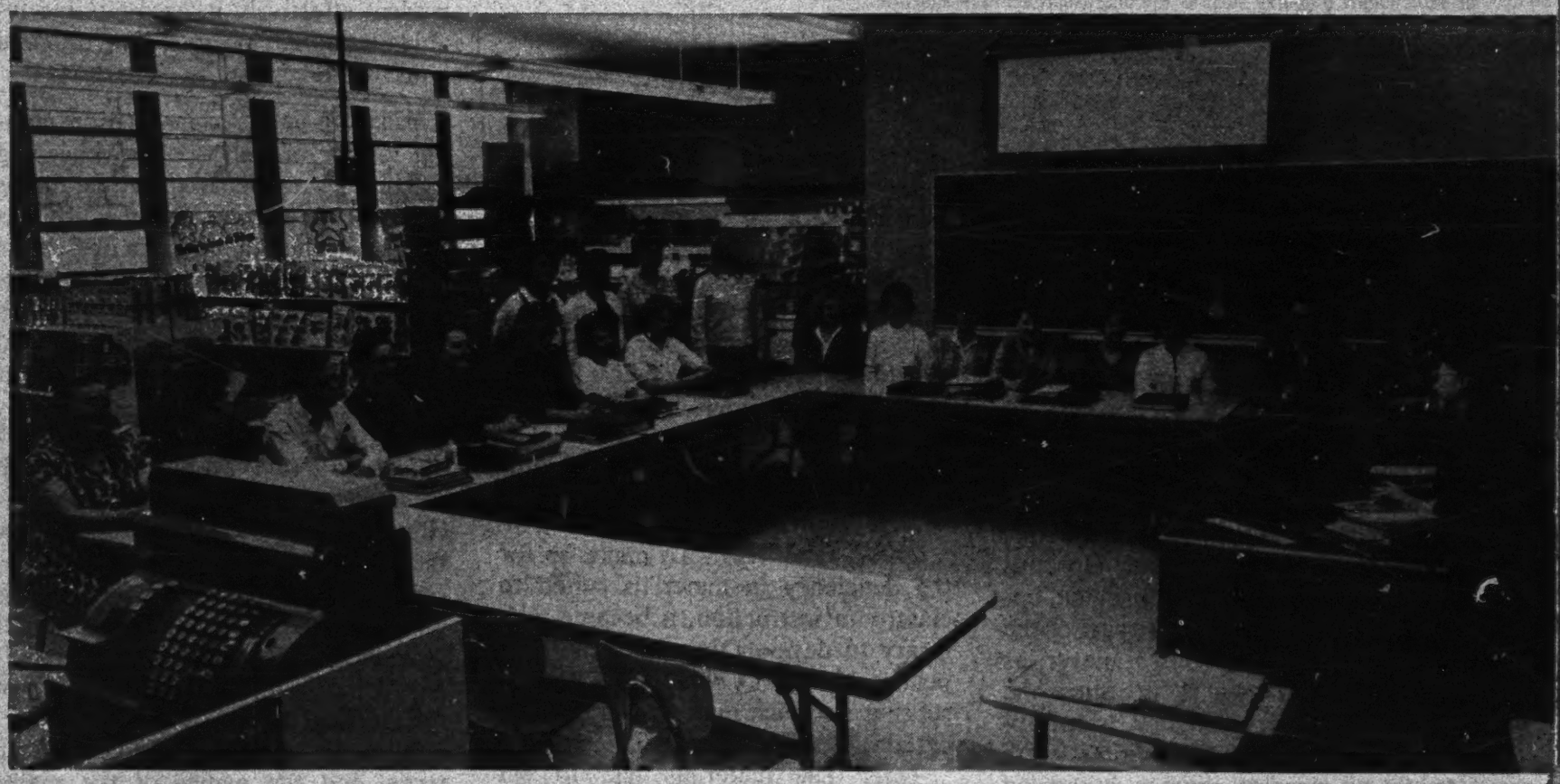
NOV 13 1967

CLEARINGHOUSE FOR
JUNIOR COLLEGE
INFORMATION

ERIC

The author is coordinator of the Adult Distributive Education programs at Spokane Community College. The program described here is one among several he has developed in that capacity.

Employment opportunities break for DE-trained checkers and sales personnel in Spokane area



In this community college classroom, training facilities are as true to life as the instructional approach.

ON JANUARY 1, 1964, the distributive education department of Spokane Community College introduced a new program to adults living in Spokane and the Inland Empire. Students who enrolled in the Sales and Checker training program were surprised as they walked into the classroom for the first time. Here was a grocery store—checkstands, registers, scales, gondolas, dairy and freezer cases, all arranged in true grocery-store layout with dummy (and some live) packaged merchandise supplied by packers and distributors.

It was an ideal training atmosphere.

The program was established as a six-week course, the sessions scheduled Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Initial emphasis was placed on grocery sales; the 180-hour course included cash register and scale work and actual checking out of grocery merchandise. Drills on refunds and overrings, store mathematics, emergency situations, customer relations, packaging, display, introduction to basic techniques in sales, equipment and its use—these and other phases of store operation were offered.

Training Needs Clear. A survey at the beginning of the program had indicated a turnover of checkers in eastern Washington, northern Idaho, and western Montana estimated at a minimum of 500 a year. With enrollment limited by the college to 25 persons for each six-week class, it was obvious that a full schedule, year round, would only begin to satisfy the demand for trained personnel.

In coordinating the program at the start, college officials worked with an advisory committee who were invaluable in the development of the curriculum. Represented on the committee were management, labor, and local distributors.

The college was also fortunate to get a grocer as temporary instructor, a man who had held supervisory positions in chain store enterprises on

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Mother-daughter combination reflects policy on training age—18 years and up.

both east and west coasts. Though he was with the college on a short-term basis, his ability and contacts in the food industry got the class off to a flying start.

Don't Need Any Help Today. Two six-week sessions passed, and students started the search for jobs. A few were placed, but many were rejected. "We train our own help," was a common greeting. Or, "I want a man." "You're too young."

In the DE department we were becoming a bit concerned. We began to study the reception given our students and came up with two obvious conclusions.

First, to concentrate the bulk of the program on grocery checking was a gross mistake. Even though basic principles of selling were included in the training, the checking idea became implanted so strongly in the student mind that he tended to make application only at grocery stores. Other job possibilities were largely ignored.

Second, a selling job had to be done to all retail firms, whether foods, hardware, drugs, or some other line. Apparently news stories in local papers and notices in distributor letters to dealers had failed to impress on local retailers the benefits they might reap from the employment of trained workers.

Program Revised. Changes were in order—and they seemed to come automatically. First, we had the good fortune to obtain the services of a permanent instructor who had just retired from Spokane's largest J.C. Penney store with more than 20 years of service as personnel manager and trainer. Through her years of service, she had acquired a tremendous understanding of people; she also understood business and the problems of retail merchants in filling their personnel requirements.

With enrollment continuing at a steady pace, we formed new classes every six weeks, incorporating new ideas along with the old. A three-fold objective was established: first, to train for immediate entry into business; second, to encourage students to further their education; and third, to attempt, on a common sense basis, to develop the whole personality of every student.

Employment opportunities were analyzed and all students alerted to the size of the total employment picture. Along with the original check stand program, we gave much more time to basic mathematics, communications, self-analysis, and employment procurement. We increased class functions to include special speakers, tours, films, and graduation exercises topped off with a certificate of satisfactory completion. All enrollees now receive a wallet-size card identifying them as students of the Sales and Checker class of the college —a badge that is rapidly becoming an entrée to the personnel manager.

Greater emphasis on the development of the individual as a whole rather than on teaching him the mechanics of the cash register has paid off. We find that the student is more acceptable to the store manager, that he is able to adapt to a broader range of employment opportunities, and that he is more likely to succeed on the job, whatever it may be.

Who Is the Student? Students who enter the program must be high school graduates, or 18 years of age or older. Even though registrants are not screened, they always contain a surprisingly large proportion of superior individuals. In no sense is the program a "dumping ground."

We stand firm on the rejection of the prospective student who is unemployable. The beatle, the shaggy haircut, or the bewhiskered intellectual is not generally acceptable in the local market; the sooner the prospective student realizes this, the better off he he will be.

We do not however reject these candidates outright. They have the opportunity to get into class if they agree to get a haircut and/or shave off the chin adornments before the first session. The young lady who comes into class the first time in stretch pants is given the word to change—or else.

Students are expected to attend class in the type of dress and with the same attitude that an employer would expect of them. Compliance with this classroom regulation has profited both the student and the college. Local firms are beginning to differentiate between our Sales and Checker student and the "drop in" applicant. A recent survey of all students shows that over 70 per cent of those reporting from this year's classes have found employment.

VE Vindicated. Requests for trained students are coming in. Many Spokane business firms are in regular contact with the distributive education department. Supermarkets, small grocers, department stores, shopping centers, hamburger drive-ins, drug stores, hardwares—even service and business offices—are making their needs known to us.

We are experiencing the satisfaction that comes when a student calls to say she has just been made department head in one of the large stores in a new shopping center– or when a student reports he would never have made the grade had he not had the benefit of vocational training.

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COVER

"Teaching is an interpersonal process in which one individual reacts to another," states John Beaumont on page 18. The cover photo, illustrating this concept, is from a two-part sound filmstrip, "If You're Not Going to College," produced and distributed by Guidance Associates of Pleasantville, N.Y.

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